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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0472
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SUBJECT: ANC SUCCESSION - ZUMA LEADS IN PROVINCIAL COUNCIL
NOMINATIONS

REF: A. PRETORIA 3764

[1](#)B. PRETORIA 3816

[1](#)C. PRETORIA 3939

[1](#)1. (SBU) Press reports indicate that ruling African National Congress (ANC) Deputy President Jacob Zuma won ANC presidential nominations in five of the nine Provincial General Councils (PGCs) held this past weekend, losing by only a small margin in several of the others. Multiple sources report Zuma topping the nomination list in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal, as expected, plus the provinces of Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, Gauteng and Free State. President Thabo Mbeki topped the list in his home province of Eastern Cape, plus North West, Western Cape, and Limpopo.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In another surprise, the ANC Women's League also endorsed Zuma's candidacy in a 29-25 vote late on 26 November, following ten hours of debate. The ANC Youth League has long endorsed Zuma's presidential candidacy. The South African Communist Party (SACP) and the COSATU trade union federation continue to strongly endorse Zuma, though they will not have voting delegates at Polokwane. However, as members of the tripartite governing alliance, SACP/COSATU will send a 25-member, non-voting delegation to the conference, which will provide them with a platform for influence in pre-election candidate selection debates.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Based on what is known about allocation of voting delegates attending the ANC national conference in Polokwane December 16-20 (Ref B), the provincial and league results appear to give Zuma a slight edge. His five provinces plus the leagues represent 2116 of the 4075 total delegates. Mbeki's four provinces account for 1893 of the remaining delegates, while the votes of the 60 NEC members and the six current ANC leadership positions remain a wild card.

[1](#)4. (SBU) COMMENT: This is a somewhat stronger showing for Zuma than was expected by most analysts heading into the PGCs, and the results have gained him considerable positive press. However, these results are more indicative than predictive. This is the first post-apartheid ANC vote where a clear consensus on succession has not been achieved in advance. Party election officers are still negotiating the framework for election procedures in this climate. There is no guarantee that each candidate will receive the votes of all branch and provincial delegates from the provinces that supported them this past weekend. Most provincial nomination races were close. Delegates will "vote their conscience" by secret ballot in Polokwane. Delegates are not formally bound

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by their branch or provincial positions and may have competing loyalties and/or personal interests. The horse trading, promises, inducements, threats and influence peddling that is expected will likely lead to more unpredictable results. Zuma is heading into the national conference with good momentum, but it is still a very tight race and anything could happen on the floor at Polokwane. Zuma's decision to travel to India, England and the U.S. at this time will take him out of the fray for about one week, which may prove a tactical error as President Mbeki's organization will be pulling out all of the stops.

BOST